

Introduction

The Saint Paul Comprehensive Plan

Public Hearing Draft

Introduction is the executive summary of the draft Saint Paul Comprehensive Plan. It also describes the legal framework for the document. This public hearing draft is scheduled at the Planning Commission on December 19, 2008. See <http://www.stpaul.gov/compplan> to view drafts of the other chapters of the plan. Comments on this draft can be directed to penelope.simison@ci.stpaul.mn.us.

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What is a Comprehensive Plan?

A Comprehensive Plan is the city's "blueprint" for guiding development in ways that recognize Saint Paul's history, integrate emerging trends, and lay the foundation for responding both to those trends and to changes anticipated in coming years.

The Comprehensive Plan reflects the combined efforts of the Mayor, City Council members, the Planning Commission, the Parks Commission, the Heritage Preservation Commission, and approximately 150 people who served on six community-based task forces.

The Comprehensive Plan focuses on the built environment, or the arrangement of a city's component parts – land, streets, and buildings – and the infrastructure that supports them. It is a physical plan. Implicitly, however, the Comprehensive Plan is not about land and buildings but about the people who live and work in the city. Thus, policies in a land use plan are intended to foster the creation of jobs so that residents can earn income. A parks plan focuses on recreational facilities where children can play safely. Transportation policies are geared toward ensuring that people have the means to get between home, job, and services. In short, underlying the strategies and policies in the Comprehensive Plan is a concern for the social and economic well-being of those who live and work in Saint Paul.

SIDEBAR – THIS PARAGRAPH

The word "city" has two meanings. As a legal document, a plan is the compilation of policies adopted by the City, or the municipal corporation. The other city, which is not capitalized, is Saint Paul, the geographic area divided into neighborhoods and populated with the people who live, work, and play here.

Contents of the Comprehensive Plan

The Comprehensive Plan includes six chapters – Land Use, Transportation, Housing, Parks, Water, and Historic Preservation – as well as other adopted citywide plans and plans focusing on specific areas of the city. They include the Central Corridor Development Strategy, the Saint Paul Downtown Development Strategy, and more than 40 small area plans, district plans, and special focus plans. (See Figure //)

The Introduction, in part, describes growth targets established for Saint Paul by the Metropolitan Council, overarching trends that will influence Saint Paul's future.

Each of the six chapters in this document includes: an introduction that describes the setting for the plan, the key trends affecting the policies, and brief descriptions of the strategies; strategies and the policies. A general implementation plan, as well as implementation steps for the six chapters, are included in the Implementation section.

The Land Use chapter describes an approach for directing growth to areas of the city well-served by transit, including downtown, the Central Corridor, Neighborhood Centers, and Corridors. It also includes policies designed to support the creation of jobs centers. The strategies are:

- Target growth in unique communities
- Provide land for jobs
- Promote aesthetics and development standards

The Transportation chapter focuses on the creation of a multi-modal transportation system, as well as the construction and maintenance of streets so that they are safer for all users, including pedestrians, bicyclists, transit patrons, and motorists. The strategies are:

- Provide a safe and well-maintained system
- Enhance balance and choice
- Support active lifestyles and a healthy environment
- Enhance and connect neighborhoods

The Housing chapter includes policies for the development of new housing while, at the same time, preserving existing housing in established residential neighborhoods. It also has policies intended to foster the production of affordable housing. The strategies are:

- Build upon Saint Paul's strengths in the evolving metropolitan housing market
- Preserve and promote established neighborhoods
- Ensure the availability of affordable housing across the city

The Parks and Recreation chapter focuses on creating places offering opportunities for healthy activities and programs for ensuring that park resources are protected. The strategies are:

- Promote active lifestyles
- Create vibrant places
- Promote a vital environment
- Respond creatively to change
- Innovate with every decision
- Connect the entire city

The Water Resources Management chapter focuses on maintaining the city's water supply and sewer system, and ensuring clean water in lakes and rivers. The strategies are:

- Ensure a safe and affordable water supply system
- Reduce pollutant loads to water bodies
- Operate and maintain a cost effective sanitary sewer infrastructure

The Historic Preservation chapter includes policies designed to protect and promote the City's cultural and historical resources as well as to guide the work of the Heritage Preservation Commission. The strategies are:

- Be a leader for historic preservation in Saint Paul
- Integrate historic preservation into the broader planning processes
- Identify, evaluate and designate historic resources

- Preserve and protect historic resources
- Further economic development and sustainability through preservation
- Preserve areas with unique architectural and spatial characteristics
- Provide opportunities for education and outreach

Legal framework

The state Metropolitan Land Planning Act requires that cities and other local governments update their comprehensive plans every 10 years consistent with the Metropolitan Council's *Regional Development Framework* and its system statements for transportation, parks, and water. Assuring that cities grow in ways that use regional systems efficiently and that population and employment growth is consistent with the Council's forecasts is the purpose of the plan update process.

Saint Paul is designated as a "developed community" in the Council's *2030 Regional Development Framework*. A developed community is described as one that maintains and improves its existing infrastructure, such as sewers and roads; redevelops land to provide for additional growth of population and employment; and provides for additional growth that integrates land uses (i.e., mixed use development) and is located at centers along transit corridors.

Preparation of the Comprehensive Plan provides an opportunity for Saint Paul to position itself to respond to emerging trends, such as an increasingly diverse population and an aging population, and to pressures, including the changes wrought by the cost of energy and by the global economy. It is also an opportunity for the city to restate its commitment to be part of a regional growth management strategy that has strengthening the urban core as one of its basic goals.

Metropolitan Council growth targets

Saint Paul is about 56 square miles in size, most of it in stable neighborhoods of largely single family and duplex housing. Policies in the Comprehensive Plan provide for smaller amounts of growth in these neighborhoods while, at the same time, anticipating higher density mixed use development in downtown, the Central Corridor, Corridors, and Neighborhood Centers. Growth in these areas (See Figure ///) will satisfy the Metropolitan Council's 2030 targets for Saint Paul population, households, and employment. The targets, compared to the 2000 figures, assume a population increase of 44,160; an increase of 20,890 households; and an increase of 36,000 in employment.

	2000 (actual)	2010	2020	2030
Population	286,840	305,000	320,000	331,000
Households	112,109	120,000	127,000	133,000
Employment	184,589	196,600	210,000	220,600

Saint Paul and the Comprehensive Plan: the setting, major trends, and sustaining the city

Setting: the river, the land, and Saint Paul's early history

The Mississippi River, Saint Paul's location on the river, and topography shaped by ancient glaciers have had the most influence on the city and its patterns of development, beginning with the first settlement and extending into the 21st Century.

Saint Paul was originally settled by fur traders ordered out of cabins near the walls of Fort Snelling when the commandant in the early 1840s became exasperated with them for selling liquor to native Americans and soldiers. They moved downstream to Pig's Eye Landing, where Pierre "Pig's Eye" Parrant was trading furs from a cave. A year later the fur traders changed the name of their settlement to Saint Paul, the name of the log chapel built on top of the bluff by Father Lucien Galtier.

Saint Paul, situated high on bluffs overlooking the Mississippi River, is at the head of river navigation because movement further upstream is blocked by the St. Anthony Falls. Moreover, the shallow Minnesota River has treacherous shoals and sandbars. With access to the countryside in three directions, Saint Paul in its early years was the headquarters of the fur trade and the river terminus of the oxcart trail that ran northwest to settlements in the Red River Valley.

The railroads were instrumental in the creation of two cities along the river. It was the railroads' need for separate power stations, one near St. Anthony Falls and the mills and a second one near the head of navigation in Saint Paul, which led to the creation of two cities. One central power station during the horse-and-buggy era could not serve both areas – the mills and the waterfront. The railroads connected Saint Paul and Minneapolis to eastern cities and the plains to the west, with the principal products timber and lumber, wheat and flour.

Saint Paul from its beginnings has been a city of neighborhoods, each one characterized by the immigrants who settled them. For example, the Swedes, then the Irish and Italians moved into Railroad Island and Swede Hollow. The earliest inhabitants on the West Side and in Frogtown were French-Canadian voyageurs who had been involved in the fur trade. Germans and Irish settled on the West Side, followed by Jewish immigrants from eastern Europe and Russia. For many years an Italian neighborhood was on the Upper Landing, until it was abandoned because of periodic flooding. People from Scandinavian countries and Germany settled throughout the city. African Americans began arriving when the railroads were developed and lived primarily in the Rondo neighborhood until the 1960s, when many were displaced during the construction of I-94. More recently, Mexicans began arriving early in the 20th Century and, in recent decades, the Vietnamese and Hmong in the 1970s, and Somalis in the 1990s.

Major trends facing Saint Paul

Circumstances outside the City's purview have influenced policies in the Comprehensive Plan and will affect their implementation. Each of the six chapters in this document pinpoints trends affecting components of Saint Paul's built environment – for example, parks and recreation centers, the transportation system, and housing. Beyond those, there are three overarching trends that are shaping, and will continue to shape,

Saint Paul during the next decade. Many policies in the Comprehensive Plan are responses to these three trends, as well as part of a broad effort to ensure the sustainability of the city.

Rising energy costs and climate change

Both energy costs and climate change are having profound effects on how cities function. The cost of energy has fluctuated dramatically, rising to levels markedly higher than a decade ago. This impacts every facet of contemporary life – transportation, housing costs, and the price of virtually every product sold for personal, commercial, or industrial consumption. Energy consumption has resulted in greenhouse gas emissions that are altering the environment of Earth and affecting people’s health and lifestyles.

(link to climate info)

Declining financial resources to pay for City services

SIDEBAR – THIS PARAGRAPH

State aid to local governments.

Local Government Assistance (LGA) is calculated by comparing a city’s tax base to its estimated spending needs. Cities with insufficient capacity for local revenues receive state aid, which was for many years adjusted annually for inflation. In 2003, however, the Governor and the Legislature approved changes in the funding formula and funding levels that, in the following two years, resulted in a 30 percent reduction in Saint Paul’s allocation. An increase in 2006 and an expected increase in 2009 will make up for some of the decrease, but the allocation will not be large enough to recoup the full reduction.

Money to pay for Saint Paul services – examples are police and firefighters, parks and recreation centers, libraries, snow removal, street maintenance – has declined in recent years. The money comes primarily from property taxes, state aid to local governments, and user fees for direct services. Since the state aid allocation was reduced in 2003, the City budget has incurred various service reductions, restructuring of services, and an increased reliance on one-time revenues. There has also been a reduced investment in the City’s infrastructure, resulting in a backlog of deferred maintenance.

Reductions in state aid allocations have placed a heavier burden on the role that property tax revenues play in paying for City services. The amount an individual pays in property taxes depends on two primary factors – the financial needs of local governments, including the City, the County, and the local school district, and the value of an individual property compared to the overall tax base. New growth – whether single family or multifamily residential, commercial, or industrial – results in an expanded tax base, which means the amount local governments levy in taxes is spread to more properties. In addition, development at higher densities and commercial/industrial uses typically contribute more to the tax base because of the higher relative value of the property and intricacies of the tax code.

Changing demographics

Three sets of Census figures describe major changes in Saint Paul’s population. The changes began in the late 1980s and accelerated during the 1990s and early 2000s:

- The population is more diverse. More than a generation ago, Saint Paul's and Minnesota's populations were largely white. That changed significantly during the last 10-15 years as ethnic communities – particularly Hispanic, Hmong, and Somali – have grown, often through immigration.
- The population is aging. Baby boomers are a large segment of the country's population and, as they grow older, their needs and desires will affect how neighborhoods function.
- The income gap is widening. There are more people in the high income and low income groups, while the middle class is becoming smaller. This affects all elements of the city's economy, including housing, the workplace, and commerce.

[links to census fact sheet, population pyramid projections]

SIDEBAR TO SUSTAINABILITY SECTION

Ten Principles for city development

These principles were adopted in 1998 as the framework for public and private development activities in Saint Paul. First written for the Saint Paul on the Mississippi Development Framework, which focused on downtown and the central riverfront, they have been incorporated into planning documents for neighborhoods across the city.

1. Evoke a sense of place.
2. Restore and establish the unique urban ecology.
3. Invest in the public realm.
4. Broaden the mix of land uses.
5. Improve connectivity.
6. Ensure that buildings support broader city-building goals.
7. Build on existing strengths.
8. Preserve and enhance heritage resources.
9. Provide a balanced network for movement.
10. Foster public safety.

Sustaining Saint Paul for the future

The character of Saint Paul lies in its people, who, through the decades, have tended homes, worked, raised families, and played in its neighborhoods. Though the Comprehensive Plan focuses on the built environment, its underlying commitment is to preserve the characteristics that have nurtured Saint Paul's residents for almost 170 years so they can thrive. Its goal is to keep Saint Paul vibrant and healthy without compromising its high quality of life or changing its spirit.

Sustaining Saint Paul and its people is critical to accomplishing this goal, so that future generations have at least as much or more opportunity as the current generation. Sustainability, the overarching theme of the Comprehensive Plan, has three inter-related parts: economic; environmental; and, social:

Economic sustainability. The city, as a place to live, work and play, thrives. Workforce development, corporations, and entrepreneurs contribute to a strong economic base. Quality schools, solid housing stock, health care services, public buildings and infrastructure, as well as unique amenities attract new populations, while redevelopment renews the built environment and increases tax revenues. Enhanced transportation provides easy access to all parts of the city.

Environmental sustainability. Buildings, open spaces and infrastructure are designed with attention to ecological systems and a light environmental footprint. Buildings are rehabilitated and constructed with reused and renewable materials and utilize technologies that are energy efficient and promote conservation.

Social sustainability. The physical design of the city and its neighborhoods, its amenities and community-based activities draw people together and promote equal opportunity. Enrichment through lifelong learning, healthy lifestyles and civic engagement contribute to quality of life in each of the city's neighborhoods and the larger community.

These icons illustrate the three elements of the sustainability theme. Throughout the Comprehensive Plan, they are used to mark policies that are specifically associated with one, or more, of the sustainability elements.

Each element of the sustainability theme has multiple components, reflecting the complex nature of an older core city. Moreover, there is a multiplicity of organizations and people, in addition to the City, who are contributing to realizing the potential of each element of the sustainability theme. The strategies of each of the six chapters of the Comprehensive Plan update, for example, illustrate how the sustainability elements can be used to guide the growth of the city as its buildings and land are redeveloped. They are displayed on page //.

In addition, the City has been working on programs and projects that advance each of the sustainability elements. The economic development strategy furthers aspects of economic sustainability, such as promoting strong businesses and a skilled workforce. Developed in collaboration with the Capital City Partnership, Saint Paul Port Authority, Saint Paul Riverfront Corporation, and the Saint Paul Area Chamber of Commerce, it complements policies in the Land Use chapter. Sustainable Saint Paul relates to environmental sustainability. It includes a wide range of programs and projects that focus on carbon dioxide reduction activities; it was initiated both by the City and environmental organizations. Social sustainability is articulated in the human development goals, which have been borrowed from Twin Cities Compass, prepared by Wilder Research in collaboration with the Itasca Project and several foundations. Twin Cities Compass, in part, measures the region's collective progress toward human and economic development and, then, to inspire action. These City efforts and collaborations, some of the many examples of City efforts and collaborations that promote sustainability, are described on page //.

INSERT MATRIX HERE

Implementing the Comprehensive Plan

- 1.1 The City will undertake the action steps, outlined in the Implementation section, to implement the policies in the Comprehensive Plan.

The Implementation section includes action steps from the six chapters in this document. It begins on page //.

Planning process

Preparation of the Comprehensive Plan update began in Autumn 2006 and early Winter 2007, when the Planning Commission appointed task forces to study the issues in each subject area. In all, each of the six task forces was comprised of people with expertise in the subject, as well as residents knowledgeable about Saint Paul and its communities.

Prior to the task force phase, the Planning Commission prepared two documents designed to inform the process. A Lens for the Future: Saint Paul for the Next 25 Years describes how Saint Paul has evolved during the previous 25 years and lays out the challenges for the next 25 years, including how the unique characteristics of the city are a supporting mechanism for dealing with the challenges that face the city. The Scoping Report is an analysis of the policies in the previous Comprehensive Plan, as well as a description of the overarching issues that, at the time it was written, were expected to shape the policies in the plan update.

The Planning Commission held public hearings on each chapter. The Parks Commission held a separate public hearing on the Parks chapter, while the Heritage Preservation Commission and the Planning Commission held a joint public hearing on the Historic Preservation chapter.

(INSERT COMMISSION AND COUNCIL ADOPTION)